

U.S. SEEKS \$500 BILLION IN CHECKS FOR TAXPAYERS



JUAN ARREDONDO FOR THE NEW YORK TIMES

THE CLASS OF WHENEVER Students at Columbia on Wednesday. As traditions are disrupted, seniors are making their own. Page A16.

Sanders Urged To End His Run As Path Erodes

This article is by Sydney Ember, Reid J. Epstein and Glenn Thrush.

Senator Bernie Sanders of Vermont was reassessing the future of his presidential bid on Wednesday after a crushing round of primary losses left him with no realistic path to the Democratic nomination and the 2020 race itself was on hold because of the coronavirus outbreak.

Mr. Sanders’s campaign has stopped actively advertising on Facebook, and his campaign manager sent an email to supporters without asking for donations — the kind of steps that sometimes precede the end of campaigns. His aides say Mr. Sanders is not suspending his bid, even as some Democrats have become increasingly vocal that he should consider leaving the race.

The party’s front-runner, Joseph R. Biden Jr., has now amassed a nearly insurmountable lead in delegates needed to clinch the nomination after winning the Arizona, Florida and Illinois primaries on Tuesday. Mr. Biden has swept so many states and attracted so many demographic groups that Mr. Sanders has little left to go on besides his political message and his passionate base of liberal supporters.

Some Democrats said that with the delegate outlook so bleak, and with a deadly pandemic gripping an anxious nation, Mr. Sanders risks appearing self-centered and out of step if he insists on pressing ahead.

“Bernie is getting beat by 30 and 40 points — it’s over,” said Representative Don Beyer of Virginia, who has endorsed Mr. Biden. “This is the adult thing to do — knowing when it is time to disappear.”

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At the Front of the Test Line: A Lot of A-Listers

This article is by Megan Twohey, Steve Eder and Marc Stein.

Politicians, celebrities, social media influencers and even N.B.A. teams have been tested for the new coronavirus. But as that list of rich, famous and powerful people grows by the day, so do questions about whether they are getting access to testing that is denied to other Americans.

Some of these high-profile people say they are feeling ill and had good reason to be tested. Others argue that those who were found to be infected and then isolated

Accusations Abound of Special Access for the Privileged

themselves provided a good example to the public.

But with testing still in short supply in areas of the country, leaving health care workers and many sick people unable to get diagnoses, some prominent personalities have obtained tests without exhibiting symptoms or having

known contact with someone who has the virus, as required by some testing guidelines. Others have refused to specify how they were tested.

Such cases have provoked accusations of elitism and preferential treatment about a testing system that has already been plagued with delays and confusion, and now stirred a new national debate that has reached the White House — with President Trump being asked at a Wednesday news conference whether “the well-connected go to the front of the line.”

“You’d have to ask them that question,” he replied, suggesting that should not be the case. “Perhaps that’s been the story of life. That does happen on occasion, and I’ve noticed where some people have been tested fairly quickly.”

Inside the N.B.A., where eight entire teams have been tested, there are differing views. Bob Myers, the president of basketball operations for the Golden State Warriors, said his team thought it would be unfair for its players to seek special access.

“We’ve been told that the testing is in short supply,” Mr. Myers said in a conference call on Tuesday, explaining that no Warriors coach, player or staff member

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ANDREW SENG FOR THE NEW YORK TIMES

Demonstrating the test for the coronavirus in New Rochelle, N.Y.

Promise of Gig Economy Sours Amid Pandemic

This article is by Kate Conger, Adam Satariano and Mike Isaac.

SAN FRANCISCO — It was just after 11 a.m. last Wednesday when Jaime Maldonado, 51, pulled his rented Nissan into a lot outside San Francisco International Airport. He figured he had a long wait ahead — about two hours — before Lyft would ping him to pick up a passenger.

Occasionally, jets roared overhead — but not many, which

A Dearth of Benefits Atop Falling Earnings

meant not enough passengers for Mr. Maldonado, who said that before the coronavirus outbreak, he spent just 20 to 40 minutes waiting outside the airport for customers. To kill time, he got out of his car, looping the mask he recently started wearing around his wrist,

and went to talk to other drivers.

As the minutes ticked by, Mr. Maldonado wondered out loud, “What am I going to do to pump gas and feed my kids tomorrow?” His number of rides in a typical week had dropped to around 50 from 100 earlier in the month, he said, and his payout had plunged by half to about \$600 a week, from which Lyft would subtract the rental fee for his car.

The coronavirus pandemic is

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President Invokes a Wartime Law to Help Americans Fight an ‘Invisible Enemy’

By NICHOLAS FANDOS and EMILY COCHRANE

WASHINGTON — The Trump administration on Wednesday broadened the government’s response to the coronavirus pandemic and spelled out the first details of a \$1 trillion economic package, asking Congress for an infusion of \$500 billion for direct payments to taxpayers and \$500 billion in loans for businesses.

President Trump invoked a seldom-used wartime law that allows the government to press American industry into service to ramp up production of medical supplies. He said he would send two military hospital ships to New York and California.

He also directed federal agencies to suspend all foreclosures and evictions until the end of April as the full economic toll of the crisis began to set in around the world. And he agreed with Canada to stop all nonessential traffic across the northern border.

After weeks of playing down the outbreak, Mr. Trump appeared on Wednesday to fully embrace the scope of the calamity, saying he saw himself as a wartime president and invoking memories of the efforts made by Americans during World War II.

“Now it’s our time,” Mr. Trump said at a news conference at the White House. “We must sacrifice together because we are all in this together, and we will come through together. It’s the invisible enemy.”

Yet Mr. Trump appeared to hedge on the severity of the crisis,

saying the wartime power law was “a worst-case scenario in the future.” The president also continued to refer to the disease as the “Chinese virus,” brushing off questions about whether the phrase was racist.

The prospect of escalating government intervention fell far short of reassuring investors. Markets erased Tuesday’s gains and plummeted to new lows, as reports of mass layoffs steadily reached Wall Street and Ford, General Motors and Fiat Chrysler all said they would temporarily shutter their plants in the United States.

The S&P 500 declined about 5 percent, wiping away nearly all of the gains made during Mr. Trump’s presidency on another day that saw an automatic 15-minute halt in trading to prevent a stock market crash. Oil prices and European stocks were also sharply down. And the New York Stock Exchange announced it would temporarily close its trading floor and move fully to electronic trading for the first time in its history after two people there tested positive for Covid-19.

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PROGRESS IN CHINA For the first time, Beijing has reported no new local infections. PAGE A6

A FAMILY RAVAGED The virus has led to three deaths in a close-knit New Jersey clan. PAGE A17



ERIN SCHAFF/THE NEW YORK TIMES

Senator Mitch McConnell said talks were “moving rapidly.”

Weighing an Immense Bailout For Businesses, With Strings

By JIM TANKERSLEY and BEN CASSELMAN

WASHINGTON — Entire sectors of the American economy are shutting down, threatening to crush businesses, put millions of people out of work and forcing lawmakers to consider a vast financial bailout that would dwarf the federal government’s response to the 2008 crisis.

The scale of the problem is unlike anything Washington has faced before: The financial crisis, which sent unemployment skyrocketing to 10 percent, centered on foreclosures and the banking sector while this crisis is springing from dozens of places at once, as restaurants and movie theaters shut down, factories close and airplanes, public trains and buses run nearly empty of passengers.

Economists fear that by the time the coronavirus pandemic subsides and economic activity resumes, entire industries could

be wiped out, proprietors across the country could lose their businesses and millions of workers could find themselves jobless.

To blunt the fallout, Washington is weighing proposals that could easily top \$2 trillion, a staggering jump from the initial \$8.3 billion virus response bill lawmakers approved this month. That includes a \$1 trillion request President Trump floated with Congress on Wednesday, which would provide direct payments to individuals and small businesses, along with aid for airlines and other affected industries.

Mr. Trump and Republicans are also weighing a separate proposal that would potentially extend \$1 trillion in assistance to small businesses, to keep them afloat during the outbreak and keep workers on their payrolls.

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INTERNATIONAL A18-20

Manna, or Something Like It

Tons of carrots and sweet potatoes have been dropped from a helicopter to feed wallabies that were left starving after Australia’s long-running drought and rash of wildfires.

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China Signals Its Confidence

Western media once served as a useful tool. Now Beijing seeks to shape its own narrative, further distancing itself from the world, Li Yuan writes.

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NATIONAL A21-25

Earthquake Cuts Power in Utah

With a magnitude of 5.7, the quake was the strongest to hit the state since 1992 and knocked out electricity for tens of thousands. One mayor called it “the last thing we need right now.”

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BUSINESS B1-8

Epstein Ally Sues His Estate

Ghislaine Maxwell, a business associate and ex-girlfriend of Jeffrey Epstein, said he had promised to pay her legal fees for claims brought against her by his accusers.

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THURSDAY STYLES D1-6

Young, Trendy and Chaste

Shirts that proclaim “Virginity Rocks” are a hit among teenagers, but not always for the same reason.

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The High Price of Blue Chips

A new HBO Sports documentary looks at corruption in college basketball recruiting with a scout, Christian Dawkins, who is facing time.

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SPECIAL SECTION

The Ruthless Prince

Ben Hubbard explores the rise of Mohammed bin Salman, the Saudi royal who has upended his kingdom and shaken the entire Middle East.



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He Orbitied the Moon in 1971

While two Apollo 15 crewmen roamed the lunar surface, Alfred M. Worden took valuable photographs from the space capsule. He was 88.

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